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THE SOIL CONSERVATION PROGRAM IN THE EAST CENTRAL STATES

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A radio talk by William G. Finn, Acting Director of the East Central Region, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, broadcast in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour, Thursday, April 2, 1936, by WMAL and 49 other stations affiliated with the National Broadcasting Company.

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Thank you, Morse. I am talking especially to farmers of the East Central Region but I hope farmers from other areas who are listening in will be interested in the way we are tackling the common problem of soil conservation. I know this was true when Mr. Cobb talked last week about the Southern Region. So I'll start right in on the way the program has been fitted to the needs of the East Central Region.

As most of you know, the new Soil Conservation program aims to curb damage done to farm land by depleting crops and by erosion. For most farmers in this region, cooperating in the program will mean diverting some land formerly in soil depleting cash crops to crops that conserve the soil or build it. Planting helpful crops like that usually means cash outlays for farmers, even though it pays in the long run. So payments will be made in 1936 to farmers who take definite steps to conserve or build the soil.

The total of funds available for all regions of the United States for 1936 is around 470 million dollars. A fair share of that total will be available for payments to farmers of the East Central Region.

To start with, suppose we take up the things the farmer must do to be eligible for a payment. First, he must know the way that crops are classified in the East Central Region.

As in other parts of the country, there are three groups -- soil depleting crops, soil conserving crops, and soil building crops.

Here is a list of soil depleting crops: Corn (and that includes sweet corn) cotton, tobacco, Irish potatoes, and sweetpotatoes. All commercial canning and truck crops are on the list, including melons and strawberries. Peanuts, if they are harvested as nuts, are included too. So are the sweet sorghums. The small grains are included -- wheat, oats, barley, rye and the small grain mixtures -- if they are harvested for grain or hay. Then come the annual grasses, including Sudan and millets, if they are harvested as hay or seed. Summer legumes are included too, if they are harvested as grain or hay. These include soybeans, field peas, and cowpeas. So much for soil depleting crops.

The soil conserving crops and soil building crops in the East Central Region include practically all the kinds of legumes and grasses which are grown on crop land. They also include forest trees planted on crop land since January 1, 1934. Winter cover crops, such as rye or barley, are listed as soil conserving if they are turned under as green manure, or are followed by summer legumes. The division of these classes of crops as between soil conserving and soil building is based upon the kind or variety of the crop, the date of planting, and the way in which it is handled during the year. For example, a mixture of perennial grasses on crop land which is grazed by live-
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stock would be classed as soil conserving; whereas sweet clover or alfalfa would be classed as soil building. Now the basis for separating these groups of crops from the soil depleting crops is obvious. They conserve the soil and help to build up its fertility, while the depleting crops do just the opposite.

All this crop land, I might say, is land from which at least one crop has been harvested since the start of 1930.

Each farmer participating in the program in 1936 will have a base acreage of soil depleting crops for his farm. If he grows either tobacco, cotton, or peanuts, there will be a separate base for each of these crops and a general base for all other soil depleting crops. Generally speaking, each farmer's base will be calculated from the number of soil depleting acres he grew in 1935. There may be some adjustments in these figures to allow for drought or flood conditions last year, and for acres rented under the adjustment programs.

Base acreages for tobacco, peanuts, and cotton will be, roughly speaking, equal to the bases under the adjustment programs, or equal to what the bases would have been under those programs.

Two classes of payment will be made. One of these classes will be in connection with acres shifted in 1936 from soil depleting crops to either soil conserving or soil building uses. On land shifted from soil depleting crops other than tobacco, cotton, or peanuts, the Class I payment will be at the rate of \$10 an acre for the whole country. That rate will vary among States, counties and individual farms according to the yield or productivity of the land. A farmer may receive payment for shifting up to 15 percent of his base acreage of the soil depleting crops other than tobacco, cotton, and peanuts. In the East Central Region, he can not be paid for shifting land from the production of food or feed crops required for home use on his farm. If he has been selling some food or feed crops, or products from such crops, he may receive payment for shifting the acres from which he has been making sales, up to the 15 percent limit.

Now as to tobacco, cotton, and peanuts. For tobacco, the payment for each acre shifted to soil conserving and soil building uses will be at the rate of 5 cents a pound on the normal yield of the farm for flue-cured, Burley, and Maryland tobacco. For fire-cured and dark air-cured tobacco the payment will be at the rate of 3-1/2 cents a pound. A grower may receive payment for shifting up to 30 percent of his tobacco base acreage.

For cotton the rate of payment per acre will be 5 cents a pound for the normal cotton yield of the farm. For example, on a farm where the cotton yield is 200 pounds per acre, the rate of payment would be \$10 an acre. A farmer may receive payment for shifting to soil conserving and soil building uses up to 35 percent of his cotton base acreage.

For peanuts, the per acre rate of payment will be 1-1/4 cents a pound for the normal peanut yield of the farm. A grower may receive payments for shifting up to 20 percent of his peanut base acreage.

Those are the Class I payments.

Now, farmers who take definite steps to build up their land in 1936, by planting approved soil building crops or by using approved soil building practices, may receive Class II payments. These payments are entirely separate

from the Class I payments, and a farmer may qualify for one without qualifying for the other. Or, he may qualify for both. These Class II payments will be on a per-acre basis; the rates will vary according to the crops planted and the practices used. Those rates will be set by the State committees, subject to the approval of the Secretary of Agriculture. The total for any farm of this class of payment cannot be more than an amount equal to the number of acres in soil conserving or soil building crops on the farm in 1936 multiplied by \$1. This is NOT a dollar an acre rate. It is merely a method of setting a top limit on the amount of the Class II payment which may be obtained for any farm. As you see, it gives consideration to farmers who already have acreages of soil building and conserving crops. But to get such a payment, the farmer must show further improvements made on his land this year.

Now let us see how these payments would be worked out for a farm in the East Central Region. Suppose the farm has a tobacco base for flue-cured tobacco of 10 acres and a base for other soil depleting crops of 40 acres. This farmer could receive a Class I payment for shifting a maximum of 30 percent from the 10 acre tobacco base, or 3 acres, and a maximum of 15 percent from the 40 acre base of other soil depleting crops, or 6 acres, making a total of 9 acres. The payment in connection with each acre shifted from flue-cured tobacco to soil-conserving or soil building uses would be at the rate of 5 cents a pound on the normal tobacco yield for the farm. If this normal yield should be 800 pounds per acre, the payment would be \$40 an acre. This would make a total of \$120 for the three acres.

Now on the 6 acres shifted from other soil depleting crops, if the productivity of this farm is equal to the average productivity of farm land in the United States, the rate of payment per acre would be \$10, which would give \$60 for the 6 acres. The total payment for shifting the entire 9 acres would be \$180, that is, \$120 for the tobacco land and \$60 for the other land. This is the Class I payment. Now if the farmer has new seedings of soil building crops or adopts approved soil building practices, he may qualify for a Class II payment, in addition to the Class I payment.

Under this program, a certain minimum of performance is required before a farm can qualify for any payment. No payment can be made unless the farm has in 1936 an acreage of soil building or conserving crops equal to the largest number of acres the farmer can be paid for shifting to soil conserving and soil building uses.

Farmers who qualify will be paid when the results of their year's operations can be measured. There will be no contract of any kind. The only papers will be a farm work sheet, and, later in the year, an application blank to fill out in applying for payment.

The first step in participating in the program is for the farmer to fill out a work sheet for his farm, with the aid of the community committeemen, and file it with the county committee, or county agent. These work sheets are now being printed and should soon be available. Meanwhile, the county agents and committeemen throughout the Region are becoming familiar with the different features of the program and it is expected that in many counties farmers will be given an opportunity to fill out work sheets within the next two weeks.

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All of you know, of course, that flood control is an important feature of the Soil Conservation Program. Those of us in the East Central Region, particularly, who have witnessed the death and destruction caused by the swollen streams of the last two weeks, are fully aware of the great need for taking definite steps to check these flood waters in the future.

I see that my time is up. Now may I say in closing that the success of the new program depends upon farmers themselves. If they feel they will be helped by cooperating in this national effort to conserve our soil resources, I am sure they will accomplish something both for themselves and for those who follow them on the land.